An

Essay

on conception.

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Amidst the fluctuations of medical science and during the disquisition of Physiological questions, much has been said with eagerness, and pertinacity on conception.

Numerous and diversified, however as have been the theories advanced on the subject, which bears date from the time of Pythagoras, many of them like other speculations of philosophers, are entitled to no further credit than that of ingenuity, and are now entombed with their advocates.

As however our art advanced in improvement, and became illuminated by the blaze of science, two sects arose, which divided the doctrines of conception into distinct classes; to one of which, all theories carrying with them, the probability of correctness, have been refered.

The first, and most antiquated of these doctrines, argues the preexistence of germs, and that

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these germs, created with the beginning of things, were scattered through the world, but ultimately meeting with appropriate genital organs effected a lodgment therein, and became fit for developement. This hypothesis however did not stand long before it was stripped of its primitive shape, and pruned of part of its absurdities, by its modern advocates; who alledged that these germs, did not rove about seeking a suitable site, for a habitation and home.

It was on the contrary by them supported that all of the same species were ab Initio neatly incased, one within another, so that the first parent animal, or vegetable, contained the germ of each succeeding generation, which to be evolved required only the seminal impulse of the male. Some other dissention has likewise existed amongst the advocates of Palengenesis, as to the, origin, existence, and developement of

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the germs; agreeing however in the fundamen=tal principles of the hypothesis; they maintained, that the germs, as the exact miniature of the animal, or vegetable, to which it belongs, exists in the female prior to fecundation, requiring only the stimulus of the male semen to excite it into life.

Epigenesis on the contrary denies the preex=istence of germs, and supposes the fluid con=tained in the ovarian vesicle, to be the crude unprepared, elementary matter of the foetus, which after impregnation, becomes organized, into an emb=ryo, by the influence of the male semen.

It is under this division that I mean to com=prehend, what I conceive at present, to be the most plausible Theory of conception.

Conception I shall define to be the impregnation of the ovum, by the stimulus of the male semen, exerted on the vagina, and through the medium of the rest of the genital organs, by sympathy

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transmitted to the ovaries.

That it may take place, requires,

1st That the female should have arrived at the age of puberty.

2nd That the genital organs, should have completely developed themselves.

3rd That she should have menstruated, or felt a disposition to do so.

4th Of all the operations, of the animal economy, that of generation requires, that the most perfect harmony, and unison, should exist in the uterine system. as any irregularity produces an incapacity to conception.

5th That an equal degree of excitement, should exist between the male & female.

6th That the semen be applied to the vagina, os uteri, cavity of the uterus, or all of them.

The two first of these propositions I take for conceded, as at present I do not know that the validity of them are questioned.

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That she should have felt the menstrual effort, I think is well established, from a permanent suppression of the menses, having in more instances, than one followed the loss of the ovaries. cases have moreover occured where from original deficiency of the ovaries, menstruation never took place, neither did conception.
That the excitement should be equal, I infer from the numerous instances, of one man, being able to enjoy a prolific intercourse, and another of the same temperament, athletic habit of body, and equally healthy, being unable to effect it with the same female. Now I maintain that where the excitement of the male is in excess, that the stimulating qualities of the semen, is likewise proportionately increased, and that this increase of stimulus, deprives it, of its specific quality, which is essential to enable it to excite the ovum into the generative action. consequently the excessive stimulus of the semen, wears down more violently

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the excitement, and destroys the susceptibility to impregnation.

To illustrate the correctness of this hypothesis more fully, I shall detail a fact which is every where to be observed through our country. It is this. That an orchard planted on the western, or northern side of a hill or, mountain, is uniformly observed to produce more exuberantly, than one on Eastern, or southern side. The Western, or northern orchards are even known to bring forth good fruit, when the Eastern & southern ones are entirely blasted, and bring none at all. Why? because from the heaviness of the atmosphere through the night, the blossom is in the morning left in a torpid condition, and if on the East, or South, side it is exposed to the free access of the sun rays, as soon as it breaks forth. It is destroyed, not by the frost of the preceeding night, but by too sudden a transition from torpor to excessive action.

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But let it be placed upon either of the opposite sides, the sun then has first time to warm the atmosphere, which acting on the blossom, it becomes gradually increased in comfortableness, untill the sun itself ascends the hill, bursts on the bloom, wakes it from its slumber, and warms it into life. Do we not see a frozen limb for instance, first immersed in a bucket of cold water the temparature of which being gradually increased preserves it: but if on the contrary we plunge it into warm water what takes place? violent inflammation disorganization & death.

It is mentioned in Richerands Physiology that man alone in the enjoyment of his love is exempt from the influence of climate & season, wolves copulate in the middle of winter, so do foxes. and most birds in the spring. may this not explain the fact, why wild animals, are more certain to impregnate their female

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than man, the influence of the season having precisely the same effect both on male & female, the excitement is thereby made equal, and the intercourse prolific. Domesticated animals are in some instances exempt from the periodical occurrence of venereal incalescence, but may not that be very justly attributed to habit, and is it not probable that if man were removed, beyond the sphere of the cares, and turmoils of the world, that the vicissitudes of the season, would have the effect in exciting that periodical orgasm in him, that it does in the lower order of animal creation. But if the excitement be equal, consequently there will be a susceptibility to impregnation. The semen then imparts nothing more, than the requisite specific stimulus, to quell the excitement already existing in the female. The vagina then receives nothing more than a stimulus sufficient to excite the generative process, which action being extended through the agency of the other

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organs, by sympathy to the ovaries, impregnates the rudiments of the foetus, and impresses it with the primordial principle of life.

The prolific ovum having undergone the first change in the ovaries, is loosed from its connections, grasped by the fimbriae, and conveyed by the fallopian tubes to the uterus, where it enters the cavity of that viscus, protruding before it the membrana decidua, which had been formed by the uterine vessels while the process of conception was going on in the ovaries. It is first of a mucous consistence, of extremely delicate texture; but gradually assumes a more solid form, adheres or is closely united to the uterus to the whole cavity of which, it forms a lining, except at the orifices of the fallopian tubes, and os uteri. it may therefore be considered, an indispensibly requisite preparation of the uterus, for the reception of the ovum, and the substance by which it is afterwards connected to it.

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But, that, its formation is not always evidence of conception, is proven, from its having been known to exist, previously to impregnation, proving an obstruction to the menses, and a barrier to conception. The uterus undergoes other changes post coitum before it is prepared for the reception of the impregnated ovum, such as, its neck appears to be enlarged and in a slight degree inflamed, its internal surface becomes soft, & spongy, which continues through the whole course of uterogestation.

If however the the contrary, the excess of excitement be in the female, then the semen not being possessed of that specific quality, which equal excitement can alone impart, becomes inefficient to the function of generation, the vagina takes on an irregular or spasmodic action and expels it. As exemplification of this position

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I apprehend that I have seen this very expulsive action, take place in mares; to obviate which I have seen the groom stand by, and as soon as any symptom of this action took place, to inject with a syringe, or spirt out of his mouth, a quantity of brandy into the animals eye, which upon the principles of revulsion equalizes the excitement, and helps to wear down the venerial exacerbation, and is often the cause of preventing the intercourse from proving abortive.

This brings me to the consideration, of the 6th and last position of my subject. That the semen need be only applied to the vagina. I think is deducible from the fact itself of a woman having conceived, from a mere application of the semen to the external vulva; the hymen being entire. If however we take a view of the structure of the parts, I think we are furnished at least with presumptive evidence; that as a natural process the semen never was designed

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to enter the cavity of the uterus, much less to pass the circuitous route by the fallopian tubes in order for the female to be impregnated.

Those who advocate a contrary opinion for the most part, contend that the semen is thrown into the uterus by injection from the penis, that the penis is endowed with considerable projectile power is demonstrable from the impetus with which the urine is discharged, but is not this ejaculatory power much deminished by the firm manner by which it is grasped by the vagina, in coitu, and are not the rugæ of the vagina, the spissitude and tenacity of the semen, additional obstructions to injection from the penis; add to this, the smallness of the os tincæ, and its not being placed in the immediate axis of the vagina, the appertures of the two organs are therefore not in apposition. The os tincæ is also filled with a thick glutinous matter capable of considerable resistance; and in the virgin

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uterus the almost approximated, and resiling lips of the os tincea are likewise barriers.
Moreover let us observe the smallness of the canal leading through the neck & body of the uterus, the strait still more contracted, and along the whole course of the canal, are striae and wrinkles, between which are glands, secreting a mucus, obviously calculated to resist the passage of the semen, even the proper cavity of the uterus is so small, that the surfaces are almost in contact. Such are the impediments incident to a perfectly natural and healthy condition of the parts, to these may be added others, which result from morbid derangement, or congenital deformities; and which are found to exist both in the male & female. all of which taken collectively are to me apparently insurmountable obsacles to the passage of the semen into the cavity of the uterus, much less can it pass along the fallopian tubes, when we

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concider from their structure, they are evidently calculated to convey to, and not from the uterus, and are fashioned accordingly.
Moreover the experiments which have been resorted to, in order to silence all cavils on the question nearly all report not to have traced the semen beyond the vagina.
I am aware that other theories besides that of impregnation by contact have been advanced, and may possibly require some refutation.
To that of the semen being absorbed from the vagina and taken to the ovaries, impregnating the ovum, in a way independent of the concatenated association of the rest of the genital apparatus, I answer that eagle eyed anatomy, having traced those absorbents, to their ultimate ramification, finds that they do not terminate in the ovaries.
To that, of the semen being taken by those absorbents into the circulation, there to exert the fecundating influence on the ovum, by the small quantity

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of the semen contained in the blood passing through the ovaries, I reply that even admitting the semen to be in the circulation, it yet requires that some cause, should be shown, why it should be determined, to the ovaries more than to any other viscera. besides the absorbents take up nothing without assimilating it.

To those who contend that the ovum enclosed in the ovarium, is impregnated by the Aura seminalis, which contains the principle & powers of life, the semen serving as a mere vehicle, I alledge that this Aura does not possess the fecundating power, in any degree.

Taking there into consideration the impracticability of the semen being applied to the ovary by the fallopean tubes.

the impossibility of its passing, either way, by absorption And the fact which all the experiments made comport to, that the Aura seminalis, does not possess the fecundating property.

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I think it is a just, and reasonable conclusion of Dr. Haytton, that fecundation is performed by that law of the animal economy, called sympathy or consent of parts.
That the semen first stimulates the vagina os uteri, cavity of the uterus or all of them.
By sympathy, the ovarian vehicle enlarges prepects, and bursts.
By sympathy, the fallopian tubes, incline to the ovaries, and having embraced them, convey the rudiments of the foetus to the uterus.
By sympathy, the uterus makes the necessary preparations for perfecting, the formation, and growth of the foetus. and finally
By sympathy, the breast furnishes milk for its support after birth.
This appears to me to be the most plausible theory of conception, whether however it is erroneous or not, I do not see either the advantages or disadvantages which would result, in a practical point of view. Though it is impossible to say to what the discovery of any truth would lead, before it is discovered, yet it is happy for us, that those things which are beyond, the comprehension, or which elude the observation

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of men of plain understanding, are of the least importance in practice. Providence having ordained, that the honest and assiduous application of ordinary capacities, should render us equal to the exigencies of life, and the duties we owe to Society.